

# Bostonian brings recycling to Negev

Philanthropist teams with JNF to develop Israel's desert

By Elise Kigner  
Advocate Staff

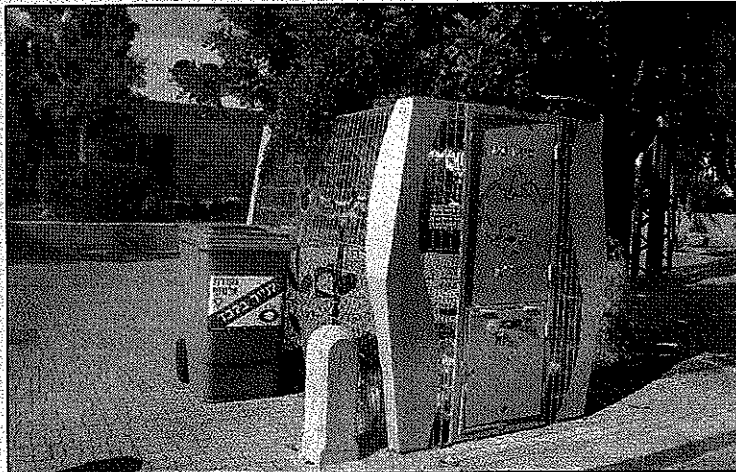
Living in Brookline, Jay Ruderman would recycle newspapers, cardboard, plastic, glass and tin. But when he made aliya three years ago, he noticed that most of what people used in Israel was ending up in the trash. So he decided to do something about it.

"In the U.S., society has been educated to learn the importance of keeping the land healthy," said Ruderman. "In Israel, we are not as advanced as we were in Boston. We are 20 years behind in terms of education, but it is coming, and especially when children in schools are taught about recycling, children tend to influence their parents."

Six years ago, Ruderman, president of the Ruderman Family Charitable Foundation, approached Jewish National Fund about starting a recycling program in the Negev. He and JNF chose to focus on one town, Arad, and in the past two years, they have put out receptacles all over town and started to educate the community about recycling. The project is set to officially kick off in June.

Before this project, Ruderman's Brookline-based foundation focused on supporting special needs students in Jewish day schools in Boston. He said making aliya encouraged him to pay more attention to Israel's problems.

Ruderman originally contacted JNF because of the organization's Blueprint Negev project, a \$600 million campaign to increase the population of the Negev through community development and environmental projects. The precious few resources of the desert, combined with JNF's ambitious plans, offered an ideal opportuni-



Recycling receptacles and education programs are part of a new environmental initiative in the developing Negev.

ty to begin a recycling program.

There are now receptacles for glass, paper and plastic, and manufacturers in the Negev that recycle the materials. And the local Haredi community started collecting maternity clothes so that they could be distributed to members of the community who could use them.

After-school programs for children have also been implemented to teach kids about the importance of recycling. A museum in Arad now displays art projects that students made out of recycled products.

The project costs about \$400,000 per year and is sponsored by JNF, the Ruderman Family Charitable Foundation, the Or Movement and the Israeli government.

A major goal of the project is encouraging settlement in the Negev, said Col. Sharon Davidovich, the emissary for JNF's New England Region. He said families coming to the Negev because of the new IDF air base in Nevatim will move to Arad because of its recycling program.

"Israel is a small country and

the only place we can expand is the Negev," said Ruderman. "The only way you can expect to attract people is to improve quality of life. One of the ways you can do this is to have a cleaner and more environmentally-friendly city."

Already, 250 people moved to Arad in the past year, said Roni Slamer, CEO of the Or movement, which works to populate and develop the Negev and plans to relocate 26,750 families to the region in the next five years.

Or is operating the recycling program. The organization finds volunteers, markets the project and takes people on tours of Arad that highlight recycling.

Slamer said that Gilad Erdan, Israel's new minister of environmental protection, wants to model recycling programs in other cities after the Arad project.

"Recycling is a mindset," said Slamer. "It says you have deep plans and you are looking a few generations ahead. And once someone hears about it, he says 'Well, this is a sustainable approach, and I want to be connected to such a thing.'"